

The Daily Star-Students Dialogue on Education

Bridging the Gap between Now and the Future

In the third of a three-day dialogue with our young citizens, boys and girls from different institutions, The Daily Star asked them to express their views on 'what would be the standard of education in the next century'. Conducted by The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam, the meeting was assisted by Ekram Kabir and Fakrul Islam Chowdhury. Below we present what they said



Shama Parveen

SHAMA PARVEEN: (Ex-student Holy Cross College) We are only three-and-half years away from the 21st century. So, I don't think within this period, we will be able to bring any revolutionary change in our education system. The changes should be gradual and slow.

We should put more emphasis on English language at primary level. Because English has become the most dominant global language. If we want to survive, we must give more emphasis on English.

At secondary level, students' choices should be given more importance in selecting subjects. Other than Bengali, English and Maths — all the subjects should be optional. Students will then have the liberty to choose from a wide range of subjects. In our existing system, if you want to be a doctor or an engineer, you must enroll yourself as a science-group student at the secondary level. At the higher secondary level too, you must be a science-group student in order to be eligible to sitting for the admission tests. And, qualify as a medical or engineering student.

So, one cannot study economics or history in any level if he or she decides to become a doctor or engineer. But a basic knowledge of history, economics and of some other subjects of humanities is very important for a student. So, I want to suggest that students



Joy Alamgir

options should be open and they should be allowed to choose from a wide range of subjects at secondary level. The existing Science, Humanities and Commerce distinctions should be abolished.

NOBONTA CHOWDHURY: (Holy Cross School) We now have three different types of education systems — Bengali medium, English medium and Madrasa education. I think education system should be uniform. We must cancel the existing three different types of education system first.

I want one uniform system for all the students. Besides, now the students belonging to different religions believe study their own religions as a subject. I think this should be canceled too. Instead of that, we should introduce a moral science subject which will deal with moral issues from a secular point of view. This subject may also include all the major religions in its field of study.

The gap between the standard of SSC level education and that of the HSC level is huge. So it becomes very difficult for a student to cope with his or her higher secondary studies. There is almost no continuity between the HSC level curriculum and the SSC level curriculum.

We now study how to build sanitary latrines in the SSC

level under our English curriculum. But in the HSC level a student have to study some classic pieces of English literature as part of his English curriculum. I want to see more continuity between the secondary and higher secondary level of curriculum.

The wages of teachers should be increased considerably so that more competent persons choose to come into this profession. Higher wages for the teachers are needed, because only this can stop widespread private tuition and coaching centre practice.

The tendency of trying to become only doctors and engineers should be stopped. And we should all study world history as a compulsory subject in



Ifat Anjum

the secondary and higher secondary levels. This will make our students able to learn lessons from the history.

IFAT ANJUM: (Ex-student, Viharunnessa Noon College) I want to suggest that semester system should be introduced in the secondary and higher secondary levels. And I support Shama in giving emphasis on English language. Technical education should be widespread.

JOY ALAMGIR: (Notre Dame College) The divisions like Science, Arts and Commerce groups in class IX should be canceled. Students should have a wide range of options to choose subjects. Standardised tests, such as SSC and HSC should be privatised. And competing organisations should be allowed to arrange such standardised tests. The government-controlled education boards should only formulate curriculums. Private organisations should conduct the tests. Private organisations should also publish books covering the board formulated curriculum, and make them available in the market. In this way, the students will have a wide range of options from which they can select their books. It will enhance the quality of our education. What I am saying is that education should be decentralised.

Bangla and English as subjects should not be compulsory at the SSC and HSC levels. We should put emphasis on these two subjects in the lower level — up to class VIII. If we can build the base for Bangla and English language at that stage, it will be much more effective. By making Bangla and English optional subjects at the secondary and higher secondary levels, we will be able to ex-



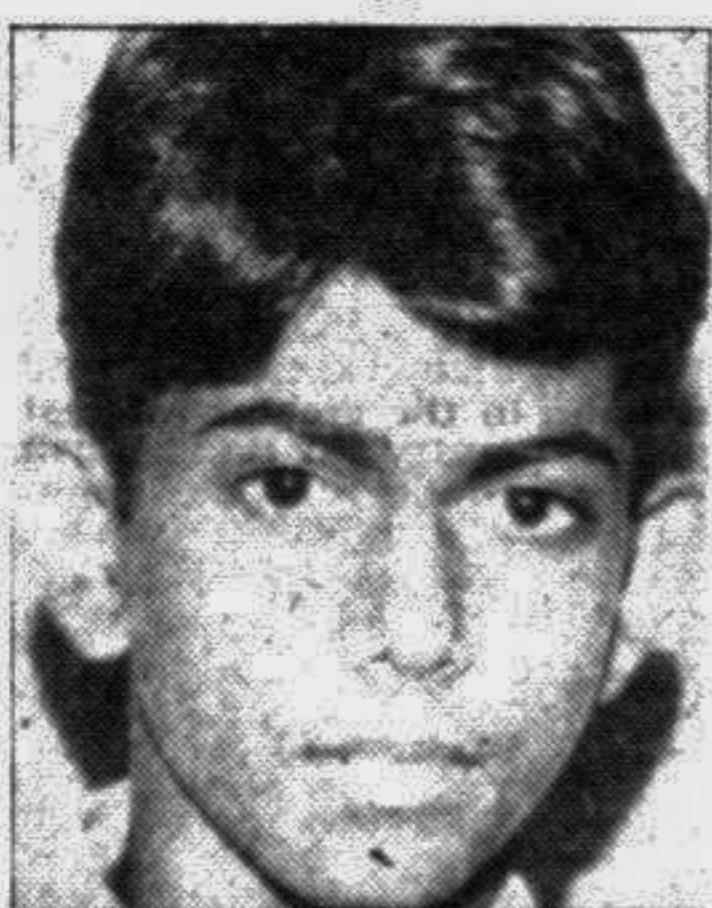
Joy Alamgir

pand the range of available options for the students. This will enable them to choose more diverse and specialised subjects at SSC and HSC levels.

SAUDHA SAHA: The syllabus in every level of our education system should be changed. Our curriculums should more humane, modern and competitive to that of the developed countries.

SAKIB HAMID PRATYAY: Our English medium students are enjoying more privilege than the Bengali medium ones. This is creating an unequal distribution of knowledge. We must abolish this discriminatory practice.

The mediums of learning may remain different in English and Bengali mediums. This will not be very damaging. But the quality of the education, the curriculum and the books should be uniform. I want a system in which up to class VIII everyone will read the same things. From class IX, students will select their subject corresponding to their future field of studies. At SSC and HSC levels semester system should be introduced. Three different types of educa-



Saudha Saha

tion systems in one country should be abolished. We don't need to study Arabic or religion at all. These subjects should be optional. I don't find any reason for Madrasa education to continue. English and Bengali mediums can be divided in the secondary level but the quality of the education must be same.

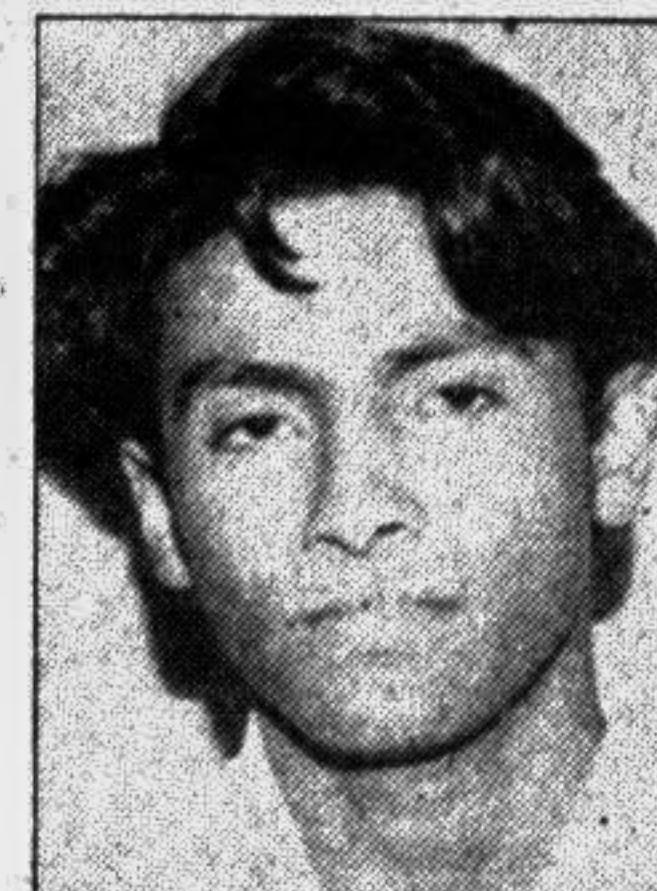
Student politics should be banned to ensure a peaceful environment in the educational institutions.

Our existing education system encourages us to take education as only a means to get a job or be established in life. We must change this attitude. We must bring back the true spirit of education to enlighten our souls. It is for preparing ourselves to face the challenges in the society. It is not making us ready to continue the progress of human race. So, we should escape the narrow utilitarian concept of education and make ourselves realise the true spirit of education. We should also build proper infrastructure and create job opportunities, so that our talents can be utilised within our country. We must stop the alarming rate of 'brain flights' from our country to the developed countries.

ASHAN JAMIL: (Government Laboratory High School) I am

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Sazia Naurin (Udayan School)
Farhana Islam (Dhaka University)
Shama Parveen (Ex-student, Holy Cross College)
Nobonta Chowdhury (Holy Cross School)
Ifat Anjum (Ex-student, Viharunnessa Nun College)
Joy Alamgir (Notre Dame College)
Tanvir Zubayer Islam (Dhaka College)
Sakib Hamid Pratyay (Govt Lab High School)
Saudha Saha (Udayan Bidyalaya)
Ahsan Jamil (Govt Lab High School)
Rasha Tabassum Azim (Viharunnessa Nun School)
Syed Mustafa Khatel (Dhaka College)
Sadat Mannan (St. Joseph's High School)



Ahsan Jamil

Joseph High School) Our first priority should be given to improve the quality of the teachers. Teachers are the backbone of any education system. If they are not qualified enough, then the standard of the education will suffer. No extent of computerisation or modernisation will be able to avert the downward trend in our education system if we can't produce quality teachers.

Secondly, we must ban the teachers' politics. We are all aware of the damages done by student politics. But I think more attention should be given to the damages done by teachers' politics. Students learn from their teacher. If they can't find any idealism among their teachers, and if they find widespread lack of commitment among the teachers, then it's not surprising that they will also choose the wrong track.

Seventy per cent of the total expenditure in the education sector is now being spent to meet the wages of the teachers. So I don't think the wages of the teachers can and should be increased.

SYED MUSTAFAKHEIAT BARI: (Dhaka College) Education must be entertaining. Our education is not related to our lives. Education should be life-related. Theories should be taught in such a way so that those become relevant in life.

Education should be more creative.

TANVIR ZUBAYER ISLAM: (Dhaka College) I want education for all. And the quality of education for all must be the same up to a certain level. The education I am getting here in the capital city should not necessarily be of a better quality from that of a rural student.

I want a student of rural school to be as much proud of his own school as I am as a student of Govt Laboratory High School. A student of a rural college should be as much proud of his own college as I am as a student of Dhaka College. The quality of education must be the same in each part of the country. Qualified teachers should be transferred to rural areas and to the institutions where the quality of teaching is poor from urban areas and from good institutions.

Admission test system for Class I should be canceled. Because a child is not supposed to learn the basics at his other home. Class I is there and should be meant for the children to learn the basics. If children have to learn every-



Rasha Tabassum Azim

thing, before even entering into the schools, why the schools are for?

So, admission tests in Class I level should be canceled. Coaching centre and private tuition system must be banned. Because only the affluent can afford private tuitions for their children. If this system exists, education will remain for the rich people only.

We don't want education to be only for the rich. And we also don't want quality education to be only for the rich people. We want education for all and we want the same quality of education for all.

MAHFUZ ANAM: My first question to all of you is: do you all agree that Madrasa education, English medium and Bengali medium should be brought under a common uniform system? You don't agree? Well, those who do not agree, can you tell us why?

SHAMA PARVEEN: The medium of my education is not at all important. It is the quality of the education that counts most. I can study in English medium or I can study in Bengali medium but the quality and the curriculum must be the same. We should study the same subjects and the quality should be same.

MAHFUZ ANAM: And Madrasa education?

SHAMA: We can add some subjects to the existing curriculums of the Madrasas. But we cannot deprive them from learning the subjects they want to learn.

MAHFUZ ANAM: But this will lead three different sections of the student of our society to three different poles. What will we do then?

SHAMA: Between English medium and Bengali medium only medium of education is different the syllabus should be the same.

MAHFUZ ANAM: In one system you have O-Level, A-Level, in another, you have SSC, HSC and even the books in two systems are different.

NOBONTA CHOWDHURY: I am in favour of a uniform education system.

IFAT ANJUM: I don't encourage Madrasa system. But we must not forget that major-



Syed Mustafa Khatel

ity of our people are Muslims. There are a lot of people who want their children to be educated from Madrasa. So I don't think we have right to deprive them.

MAHFUZ ANAM: Madrasas do not exist in Iran or in Iraq or in Sudan or in Indonesia. Then why do you think we need such a system?

IFAT ANJUM: Because a lot of people want to send their children to Madrasas. I want Madrasa education to exist separately but I want Bengali and English medium to be uniform.

SADAT MANNAN: I have a question. If we arrange Madrasa education for Muslims then shouldn't we arrange separate religion-based education systems for the minorities in our country? It must be canceled. There should not be different types of education systems in one country. Madrasa education should not be there.

JOY ALAMGIR: I want the syllabus of English and Bengali medium to be the same. But there should exist different media. Those who want to learn in English medium will learn in English those who want to learn in Bengali medium will learn in Bengali. The choice must be left to the students.

PRATAYA: I think up to Class VI, all students should have same education. After that basic education, different system may exist.

MAHFUZ ANAM: We have here three different views — some of you are saying, there should be one common national education system. Some are arguing in favour of two different systems in which one will be for Madrasa education and another will be for a combined English and Bengali medium where the syllabus will be the same the medium may be different. And a few of you are giving your argument in favour of a system where English medium, Bengali medium and Madrasa education will exist side by side.

One national education system exist in the other countries of the world. A broad spectrum of subjects is there for the students to choose from, in the mainstream education of the developed countries. Different religions as subjects are there but they are not compulsory ones. By following one uniform national



Sadat Mannan

education system they are producing one type of new generation. When all the other countries in the world are following one national education system, then in our country by following such diverse systems, how far can we go, is my question. I don't expect, an answer to this question now. But I am raising it for you to start thinking about it.

Now tell me, is the quality of the teachers satisfactory?

SAUDHA SAHA: No, it is not satisfactory. I think improving the quality of our teachers should be given the second priority to improve our education system.

RASHA: What's the first priority?

SAUDHA: The first thing we should do is to change the syllabus.

MAHFUZ ANAM: Tell us, Rasha in your opinion, what is the number one problem in our education system?

RASHA: Students are afraid of their studies, this is the number one problem.

MAHFUZ ANAM: Lack of qualified teachers, in what number it is on your list of problems regarding our education system?

RASHA: Number three.

TANVIR: Number two.

PRATAYA: Number two.

SAZIA NAURIN: Number two. I have another suggestion. There should be an independent board consisting of our leading educationists, teachers and intellectuals, which will formulate the curriculum and approve books for the SSC and HSC students. In this board will be autonomous and government will not have anything to do with it. This way we can decentralise our system and be benefited from the knowledge and experience of many people who do not work for the government.

MAHFUZ ANAM: That's a very good suggestion Sazia. We end this discussion with this good suggestion, hoping to sit together again. I thank you all for joining this discussion.



Tanvir Zubayer Islam

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

<p>Monday 10th June (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes.)</p> <p>BTV</p> <p>3:00 Opening Announcement Al-Durain Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation From the Bible 3:15 Cartoon Film: Macrom 3:45 Drama series: Retrospect of Selected Dramas 4:00 News in Bangla 4:45 Rumum: 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Nazrul Songs 5:50 Sports Programme 6:00 News in Bangla 6:30 Shikhandhar 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Chanderbaniya: Programme based on Recitation 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shikhandhar 10:35 Sukher Thikana: Family planning programme 10:55 Comedy series: Coach 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's programme 11:40 Close down</p>	<p>BBC</p> <p>6:00 BBC World Newsroom inc. World Business Report: Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00pm BBC World News 1:15 The Money Programme 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Top Gear 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: More Rhoades Around Britain 4:00 BBC Newsday 6:00 BBC News Headlines 6:05 Correspondent 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC News Hour Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: Nature 9:00 BBC World News 9:15 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 The Money Programme 1:50 Earth Report 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 3:00 BBC World Report/24 Hours World Business Report/24 Hours</p>	<p>CHANNEL V</p> <p>7:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 10:00 Frame by Frame 12:00 VJ Sophia 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alexandra 4:30 Big Bang VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophia 6:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 7:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Lunchpad 9:00 BPL Oye! 10:00 Big Bang VJ Alexandra 10:30 First Day First Show 11:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 11:30 The Ride VJ Trey 12:00am The Edge VJ Sophia 12:30 Music Master Box Show 1:00 Big Bang VJ Alexandra 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Frame by Frame</p>	<p>STAR PLUS</p> <p>6:30 Votran 7:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 G.I. Joe</p>	<p>STAR Sports</p> <p>6:00am ABC Champions Cup</p>	<p>STAR MOVIES</p> <p>7:30 Horror: The Pit and the Pendulum 12 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Classic: White Feather 12 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Comedy: 1996 2nd Semi-Final 7:30 Trans World Sport 8:30 Asia Sport Show 9:30 The European Tour 10:30 Open Final Day 12:00 High 5 III 12:30 International Motorsports 12:30 WLAF Highlights 2:00 The Asian Football Show 3:00 Statesman Vintage & Classic Car Rally 3:30 Gillette World Sport Special 4:00 Trans World Sport 5:30 The European Tour English Open Final Day 8:00 Marlboro League '96 Chinese National Football League Beijing vs Shenzhen 9:00 Beijing 10:00 Inter national Budo festival 11:00 Asia Sport Show 11:30 The Asian Football Show 1:00 Prime Boxing 2:30 The World Auto Bikes Championships 3:30 ABC Championships Cup 1996 3rd & 4th Place From Manila</p>	<p>ZEE TV</p> <p>5:30am Infotainment (TMM) 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED: Naya A To Z 7:30 ZED Networking 8:00 ZED: Naya A To Z 8:30 Dream: Merchants 9:00 Hum Zamane 9:30 Gaane Anjaane 10:00 Zaike Ka Safar 10:30 Solah 11:00 Daak Ghar 11:30 Doctor In The Distress 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Classic: Love Me Tender PG (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Family: David 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Western: Against A Crooked Sky 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Film Fiction: Watership Down PG (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Decan Dream 9:30 This Week That Year 10:00 Comedy: Les Bidasses S'en Vont En Guerre? (English Subtitles) 11:00 World Cinema: The Bride 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 1:30 Film Club: Me And Veronica 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 3:30 Thriller: Above Suspicion 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Film Club: Night of the Ghoul 12 (Arabic Subtitles)</p>	<p>PTV</p> <p>6:00am Talawat 8:00 Tarjuma Humd/Nost 8:20 Carina 8:30 Khairan 8:45 Abh Pata Chale 9:05 Khat Farshah 9:20 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Inqilab Ghiza Pakistan 10:05 Shab Dagh 10:35 English Film: Gool Troop 10:55 Gopaljee 12:00 Jaanbar 12:30 Sam Sana Tring Tring 1:00 ZED: Chota Bheem 1:30 Asian Sky Shop 2:30 Tara 3:00 Filmi Chakkar 3:30 More Ghar Ana Zindagi 4:00 Mano Ya Na Mano 4:30 Naye Tarane 5:00 ZED: Chota Bheem 5:30 Akbar Baral 6:00 Cartoon 6:30 Positive Health Show 7:00 ZED 7:30 Gaane Anjaane 8:00 TMKB 8:30 17 Shirley Road 9:15 TVS Sargam 9:30 Campus 10:00 Doraar 10:30 The News 11:00 No Problem 11:30 Close Up Antakshari 12:00 Tara 12:30 Andaz 1:00 9 Malabar Hills 1:30 Tumhare Liye 2:00 FLU 2:30 Infotainment (TMM)</p>	<p>SONY ET</p> <p>8:00am Yaadon Ki Baraat 8:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Raja Rani Aur Jukar 11:00 Sunday Ki Sunday (Serial) 11:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 2:30 Kismet 3:00 Zamin</p>	<p>EL TV</p> <p>00:30am Dance Dance 01:30 Jagal Jodi 02:30 R.D. Burman Special 03:30 Party Time 04:30 Tarane 05:30 Dance Dance 06:30 Jagal Jodi 07:30 R.D. Burman Special 08:30 Party Time 09:30 Tarane 10:30 Fantasy Kal Bh Bh 11:00 Teri Bhi Chup Meri Bhi Chup 11:30 Wonder Wonders Amer From 12:00am Dev Anand Special 1:00 Best of the Best 2:00 Feet Bole 3:00 Shitani 3:30 V.I. 4:00 Best of the Best 4:30 The Music Show 5:00 Teen Do Parichay 5:30 Dev Anand Special 6:30 Best of the Best 7:30 Awarz Naya Andaz 8:00 D. Signor quart: top of the tops 8:30 Zandu Balm Drama 9:00 Sorry Meri Jari 9:30 Shadi Dehshat Kar 10:30 Fortune Chalo Cinema 10:30 Newsline 11:00 Amitabh Bachchan Special 1:00 Dance Dance</p>
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